



**Rep. Charles Ross**  
**Assistant Minority**  
**Floor Leader**

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# Charles Ross

**State Representative • 14th District**

## 2008 Session Preview

Dear friends,

I hope you and your family enjoyed the Christmas season and are looking forward to the new year.

Since session ended last year, I've had the opportunity to speak with many of you about some very important issues ... issues like crime, taxes, education and health care. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Even though we don't always agree on every issue, I know that government works best when people are involved, so please stay in touch. I want to hear from you.

I proudly voted to reinstate I-747 along with the large majority of legislators in both the House and Senate during last November's special session. The initiative capped local government tax rates. Although the measure had been strongly approved by voters years ago, the issue was before the Legislature because the state Supreme Court declared it to be unconstitutional. This is just a start to creating a predictable property tax structure for Washington residents.

Back in November, I was chosen by my Republican colleagues to be Assistant Floor Leader. I was also given a position on the Appropriations Committee, which is considered the most-influential committee because it controls the state's budget. I look forward to using my new positions to benefit the Yakima Valley as well as the state of Washington.

The 2008 session began Jan. 14 and we are already busy at work. As you probably know, this is our "short" session and we should be done by mid-March.

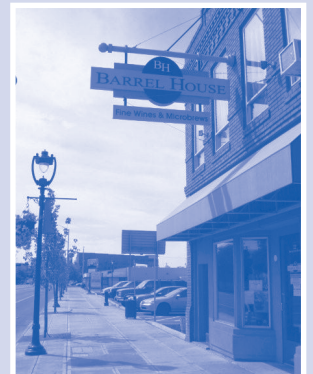
Public safety is at the top of the agenda for me and many of my colleagues here in Olympia. Let me assure you that I am working hard this year to pass laws that make things tougher for criminals and that put our families first.

I am also working to control government spending and preserve some of our budget "surplus" for the future.

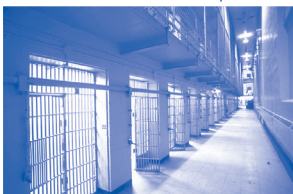
As I said, please feel free to call my office anytime with your opinions or questions. I'm here to serve you.

Sincerely,

Charles Ross



## Gang-Related Crime



Most of you know the harm that criminal street gangs have done to our society. Most of you join me in being angry that these gangs have made so many of our friends and neighbors feel unsafe outside of their homes. And most of you know — as do I — that something has to be done about this problem... and soon.

That's why I agreed last year to co-chair the Legislature's Gang-Related Crime Workgroup that was formed to study the issue and offer solutions. The task force met each month from July through December in different cities around the state, including Yakima. We discussed how to keep youngsters from joining gangs, how to help people get out of gangs and how to combat gang-related crime. We heard a lot of good ideas, including how some cities in California use civil courts — as well as criminal courts — to fight gangs.

We listened to community members in Yakima, Bellingham, Spokane, Vancouver, Tacoma and SeaTac say the state needs to help turn around the lives of children involved in gangs. We also heard many citizens say the state needs to give police the tools they need to end the fear on our streets. Others talked about the need to clean up graffiti so gangs cannot communicate with each other.

The group also discussed establishing a statewide database that would monitor gang members and share that information among police departments. We also talked about increasing the number of police who focus solely on gang crimes.

Gang violence is a complicated issue. We need to look at an assortment of ways to prevent it and hold accountable the children, teenagers and adults who choose to join gangs. I have heard from many of you who are personally affected by gang-related crime. **Your stories help me remember why we're doing what we're doing and that safety and family are our top priorities.**

I am supporting a bill (House Bill 2712) that would implement the task force's recommendations. Although I do not consider this bill to be a "perfect" piece of legislation, it contains some important steps that I think will move us in the right direction.

# 2008 Session Preview

## Felony Eluding



Last year, we came close to passing a law that would impose harsher sentences on criminals who were convicted of eluding police in residential neighborhoods. House Bill 1030 is also known as the “Guillermo ‘Bobby’ Aguilar and Edgar F. Trevino-Mendoza Public Safety Act of 2007” — in honor of two young men who were killed in Yakima by a criminal eluding police. The bill passed the House unanimously, but essentially died in the Senate.

Along with some of my friends from the other side of the aisle — including Reps. Dean Takko and Al O’Brien — I have asked the Speaker of the House to speed the bill through our chamber this year and send it over to the Senate as soon as possible so our allies over there, including Sen. Curtis King, can work to pass the measure.

This is an important bill that sends an important message: the police must be respected and the public must be protected.

## Rainy Day Funds



Citizens know that saving during financial feasts helps you get through financial famines. This year, I have joined with other lawmakers here in Olympia who believe the vast majority of the state’s \$1.1 billion surplus should be saved rather than spent. The “rainy-day” fund, approved by voters last November in the form of Senate Joint Resolution 8206 will help us save for leaner years.

Although my first choice would be to reduce taxes so the state does not have any surplus funds, I support saving the extra money. I look forward to using my new seat this year on the House Appropriations Committee to advocate these priorities.



Rep. Charles Ross speaking in favor of limiting property tax increases during last November’s special session.

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Appropriations  
Judiciary  
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

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